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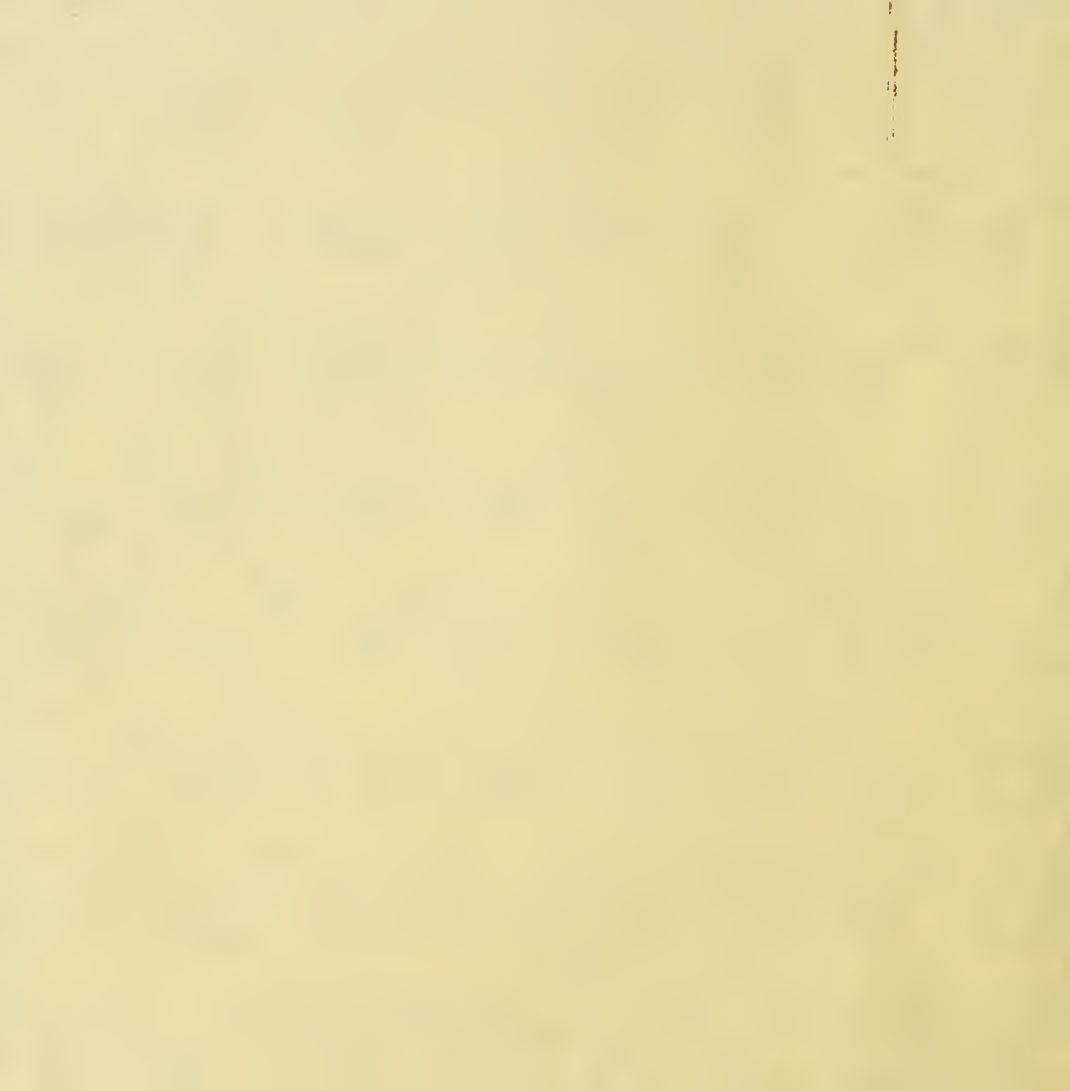
COOPER-HEWITT MUSEUM

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EMBROIDERED SAMPLERS









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in the Collection of the  
Cooper-Hewitt Museum



The Smithsonian  
Institution's  
National Museum  
of Design



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# Embroidered Samplers

in the Collection of the  
Cooper-Hewitt Museum



The Smithsonian  
Institution's  
National Museum  
of Design



### Cover

Bristol, Rhode Island, 1802  
Embroiderer: Mary Follet, age 12  
Silk on plain-weave linen  
Stitches: cross, stem, chain, running  
Dimensions: 21 x 16½ inches  
Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer  
1981-28-132

### Inside cover

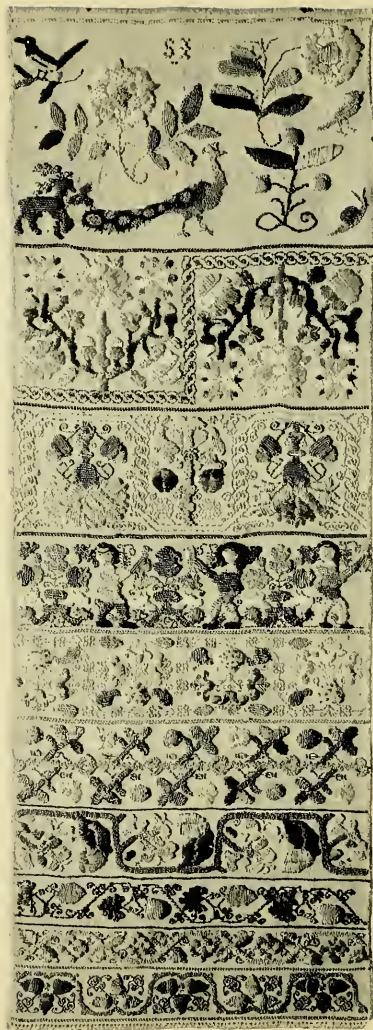
first row:  
cross stitch (looping backward  
movement)  
feather stitch  
eyelet stitch

second row:  
plaited braid stitch  
rococo (queen) stitch  
French knot

third row:  
long-armed cross stitch  
marking cross stitch  
wrapped cross

### Frontispiece

England, first half of 17th century  
Silk and metal-wrapped silk on plain-weave  
linen  
Stitches: tent, half cross, chain, running, satin  
plaited braid, back  
Dimensions: 20 x 7 inches  
Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer  
1981-28-83



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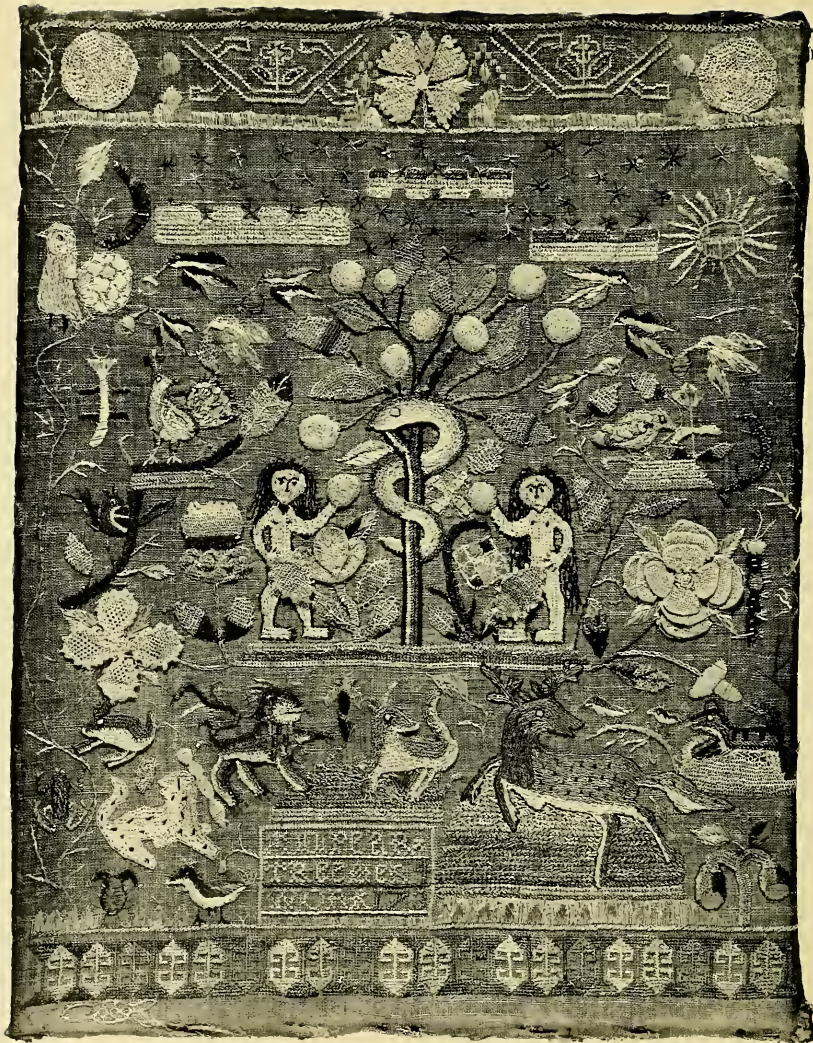


## Foreword

Most of the Cooper-Hewitt's delightful collection of nearly one thousand samplers stem from the generosity of two donors, Mrs. Henry E. Coe, who made an important bequest in 1941, and Gertrude M. Oppenheimer, whose bequest came forty years later, in 1981. Each collector had a different focus. Mrs. Coe, who had written the book *American Samplers* with Ethel Stanwood Bolton in 1921, clearly preferred the work of American and English embroiderers, while Miss Oppenheimer's interests lay in the work of The Netherlands and Germany. Gifts from Emily Coe Stowell and Rosalie Coe, Mrs. Coe's daughters, from Eleanor and Sarah Hewitt, the founders of the Museum, and from other generous donors have also enriched the collection.

The last few years have seen an increasing number of requests to study the Museum's samplers, a reflection of the general interest in folk and country styles. This publication and its accompanying exhibition, *Embroidered Samplers*, along with Gillian Moss's *Stitch Guide*, are intended to bring the Cooper-Hewitt's collection to an even wider audience. The New York State Council on the Arts has provided funds for the project. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has also given support.

*Lisa Taylor*  
*Director*



The intimate world of childhood, domesticity, and the schoolroom was the world of the embroidered sampler. Almost without exception, samplers were stitched by young girls who were attempting to master the techniques of such future tasks as mending, darning, marking household linens, and creating decorative accessories. A child often worked her first sampler at the age of five or six and later stitched several others as she mastered new and more complicated techniques. (Not until the twentieth century did it become fashionable for adult women to make samplers.) Overall, the needlework of these young children was of high quality, although the pedagogic mistakes of childhood—backwards letters, reversed numerals, and misspelled words—occasionally asserted themselves.

Perhaps it is inevitable that the nostalgia evoked by looking at an object produced by a child who lived hundreds of years earlier intrudes upon scholarly analysis; yet a group of samplers speaks of a locality, a region, or a country, and a study of samplers can lead to insights into the roles of children and women, as well as into the history, politics, and economics of a particular country or period. The foundation fabric and embroidery threads, the stitches, the combination of techniques, the design, and the shape of a sampler all give clues to where it was made and when.

The foundation fabric used for samplers was almost always plain-weave linen, cotton, or wool, of a density varying from a loose weave that made stitches easy to count, to a weave so tight that counting stitches would have been impossible. In Britain and Northern Europe foundation fabrics were specially manufactured in twelve- to fifteen-inch widths, with blue threads at the selvages.

Silk was the most frequent choice for embroidery thread, although alternatives existed in some regions. Wool was used in Northern Europe and in Spain. Linen and metal-wrapped silk embroidery threads enlivened English samplers in the seventeenth century, and by the nineteenth century, cotton thread had become available virtually everywhere and was commonly intermixed with more expensive silks.

A consideration of two English works in the Cooper-Hewitt collection, both made by the same child, one a year later than the other, suggests the importance of materials in the overall appearance of a sampler. The earlier sampler, which is the more elaborate of the two, technically and visually, is of silk embroidery on a linen foundation, while the second was worked with wool embroidery on a wool foundation. The most likely explanation for what would otherwise appear to be a decline or loss of needleworking skills is that the wool itself proved to be an impediment and is responsible for the crudity of the work.

1. Boston, the Province of Massachusetts Bay, 1734

Embroiderer: Ann Peartree

Silk, paper, and metal-wrapped silk on plain-weave linen

Stitches using silk: cross, satin, running, herringbone, back, stem, couching

Stitches using metal-wrapped silk: stem, satin

Dimensions: 14½ x 11¼ inches

Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer 1981-28-157

Ann Peartree was the daughter of Katherine Peartree, who was granted a license by the Selectmen of Boston to sell strong drink at retail. In 1744 Ann Peartree and her mother died of smallpox.



Stitches can reveal a sampler's origin, since the use of some was limited to certain countries. Among those that serve as guides are *plaited braid* done in metal-wrapped silk, which is found only on seventeenth-century English samplers; *surface satin*, which appears on American samplers; *wrapped cross stitch*, used on Spanish samplers; *Aztec stitch*, used only in Mexico; and a combination of *half cross stitch* with *double running stitch*, which was used in Turkey.

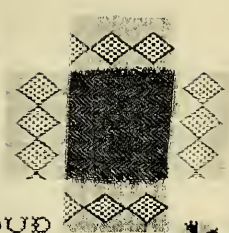
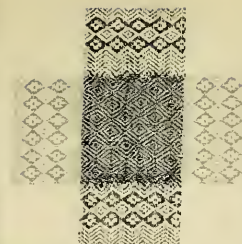
While it would seem that the surest and most direct way to determine the origin of a sampler would be through an examination of its design, the study of motifs must be approached cautiously.

Many of the motifs on European samplers can be traced to designs published in various European pattern books. Johannes Sibmacher's book *Neues Modelbuch in Kupffer gemacht*, published in Nuremberg in 1604, and Peter Quentel's book, *Eyn new kunstlich Boich*, published in Cologne in 1527, were frequently consulted sources. Some of their more popular patterns were pirated by other printers and can be found on the samplers of Germany, The Netherlands, England, and even Mexico. A considerable number of the motifs found on samplers may have had symbolic meaning originally, but through the generations they were repeated often enough so that many grew to be clichés and were routinely stitched by young girls who were unfamiliar with their associations.

In the United States, a schoolteacher was often responsible for the arrangement of a pattern. This must have been the case for an 1838 sampler in the Cooper-Hewitt collection (see figure 15). The piece shows a large Gothic Revival church erroneously identified as St. Paul's Chapel. (St. Paul's was a Greek Revival building constructed in New York in 1790.) The sampler is almost an exact match with another 1838 sampler that came up for auction in 1981. It has been discovered that the two girls who stitched these lessons lived in southern New Jersey, one in Egg Harbor, the other in Perth Amboy. Presumably they were schoolmates, both under the tutelage of a schoolmistress who was confused about the identity of an illustration of St. Thomas Church that appeared in the *New York Mirror* in 1829, about six years before the structure was finally consecrated.

Frequently an instructor combined a geography or history lesson with a stitchery exercise. Historical events were popular in English samplers. A man peering out from the branches of a tree on an English sampler in the Cooper-Hewitt collection represents Charles II hiding in the Boscobel oak, an event with which all English school children were familiar. In an English sampler embroidered by S. Edwards in 1814, we are told that "the Allies entered Paris March 31, 1814," a reference to the allied advance on Paris that resulted in the abdication of Napoleon. On samplers from The Netherlands, a country that foreign powers tried to dominate for centuries, "The Maid of The Netherlands in a Dutch Garden" was a popular symbol of

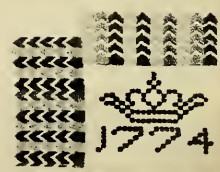
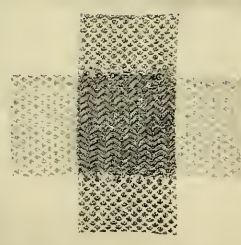
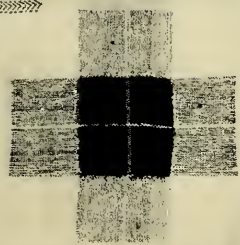
2. Friesland or Groningen, United Provinces  
(The Netherlands), 1774  
Embroiderer: I.V.S., age 15  
Silk on plain-weave linen  
Stitches: running (pattern darning), eyelet,  
cross  
Dimensions: 19 x 20 inches  
Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer  
1981-28-251  
In this darning sampler, ten squares of  
foundation fabric were cut out and  
discarded. The remaining holes were then  
filled with darning in patterns that  
simulated plain weave and various twills.

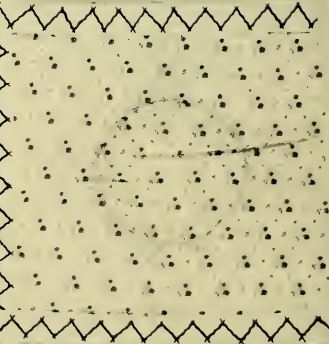
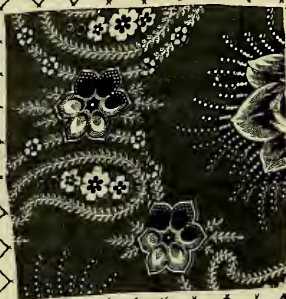
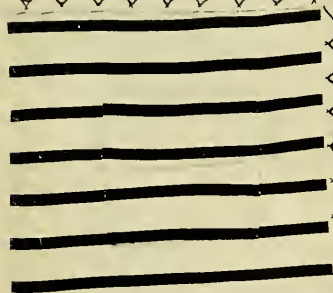


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liberty, even when the country was responsible to foreign powers.

Religious scenes were popular on samplers in both northern and southern Germany. The black-robed figure of Martin Luther is seen frequently on the samplers of northern Germany, while in the southern, predominantly Catholic states, the crucifixion is dominant.

In most European countries, sampler motifs are a combination of religious and domestic themes. Human figures usually represent characters from a Bible story: Adam and Eve, the Wise Virgins, the spies of Eschol, Jacob wrestling with the angel, or Cain slaying Abel.

With the exception of Adam and Eve, religious and secular motifs are rarely found combined in English and American samplers. Instead, ordinary people are portrayed, conducting the routines of their daily lives.

The custom of including a maxim or uplifting verse on a sampler was by no means universal. On most European samplers, lettering was limited to repetitions of the alphabet. In England, toward the end of the seventeenth century, verses and cautionary maxims began to appear on samplers. Sometimes the texts were long, with several verses of a poem. An English early eighteenth-century sampler advises us, "The sharpness of a needle profit yields and pleasure. The sharpness of a tongue bites out of measure." In a continuation of the English tradition, American samplers from Massachusetts and Rhode Island often included cautionary texts.

Deciphering the names and initials on a sampler can be challenging, and familiarity with local customs can help in understanding the names. Usually a girl's first choice was her own name or initials. Often she would include her parents' names and initials, using her mother's maiden name. When a sampler was made in school the instructor's name or initials might be included, as well as the initials of schoolmates and friends. When the names or initials of a man and woman were used together, they were usually the names of the girl's parents; only occasionally a girl would combine her name with the name of her betrothed.

In some instances the lettering style may help locate the origin of a sampler; for example, elaborate block letters were used in the Frisian Islands, off the coast of The Netherlands (see figure 4). In many European communities the local alphabet did not contain the letters *Y* and *Z*. Frequently *V* served for both *V* and *U*, and *I* served for both *I* and *J*. In seventeenth-century England, and occasionally in eighteenth-century United States, *Q* was both a backwards *P* and *Q*, with both forms being used at the same time.

A specific type of sampler known as the darning or mending sampler developed in northern Europe (figure 2) in the eighteenth century. Darning simulated the structures of the fabrics that the northern European housewife could expect to encounter in her own home—plain weave, twills, and knitting—and the skills the embroiderer acquired in stitching a darning

### 3. Northern Germany, 1879

Embroiderer: B.U.

Silk and cotton on plain-weave cotton, gauze-weave silk and 2/2 wool twill  
Stitches: cross, herringbone, threaded herringbone, overcasting

Dimensions: 18½ x 18¼ inches  
Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer  
1981-28-318

There is one fabric patch in each of the squares of this patch sampler except in the square with initials, which has two. On the five patterned fabrics, the patch has been carefully matched to the pattern.

sampler were later used to mend tablecloths, napkins and sheets.

To make a darning sampler, the embroiderer cut holes in the woven foundation fabric and then carefully darned the hole back in, using silks of different colors for woven warps and wefts, so that both the embroiderer and the instructor could see if the threads were interlacing properly. In some cases the embroidery was done through the cloth, without cutting holes in the foundation fabric.

Some of the most technically skilled darning samplers were made in The Netherlands, usually by girls who were about fifteen years old and who had previously mastered the simpler techniques of the pattern sampler. In the Dutch language there are different words for the several variously shaped holes: corner, square, three-corner, and staircase.

English darning samplers were quite different from the Continental ones. Usually the center was decorated with a bouquet of flowers tied with a ribbon. In the United States a few darning samplers were produced, although they were not common and were never as decorative or as skilled as European and English versions.

The skill of patching fabrics with a piece of the same fabric was also practiced on samplers in Northern Europe (figure 3). The technique involved placing the patch so skillfully that there was no visible change in the pattern or weave.

Another kind of sampler, the marking sampler, which was particularly important in Germany, was stitched specifically as preparation for embroidering monograms and identifying numbers on towels, tablecovers, and sheets. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European families had to mark their household linens with embroidered initials, monograms, and numbers so that the linens could be reclaimed after they had been sent to the bleach fields, a practice that was repeated annually.

Various methods were used to finish the edges of samplers. Nineteenth-century Italian samplers have cut, unhemmed edges with no protection against fraying. Samplers from Northern Europe were often carefully completed with decorative hem-stitching (figure 4). And others have been found that are still sewn to the inch-wide linen tape that the student basted to the sampler before starting the embroidery. The tape was then lashed to an embroidery frame to ensure a taut working surface. In still other instances, the hemming was almost casual.

The tradition of framing samplers so that they can be hung on a wall is not European, but was occasionally practiced in Great Britain and the United States. Samplers made at some of the more fashionable schools were framed—either by the school or by the families when the girls brought their work home. The majority of samplers, however, were left unframed. It has been the descendants of the embroiderers, or dealers and collectors, who have decided that samplers should be framed.

4. Frisian Islands, United Provinces (The Netherlands), 1696  
Silk on plain-weave linen  
Stitches: satin, eyelet, four-sided, cross, whipped running, French knot, withdrawn element work with needle-made fillings.  
Dimensions: 14½ x 17¼ inches  
Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer  
1981-28-242  
The small figures at the lower left represent Christ and the Wise Virgins (Matthew 25:1-12), a cautionary parable advocating preparedness.







5. United Provinces (The Netherlands),  
second half of 18th century  
Silk on plain-weave linen  
Stitches: rococo (queen), stem, cross  
Dimensions: 12½ x 19¼ inches  
Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer  
1981-28-51

## The Netherlands

Dutch samplers display a wide range of styles and a high level of needlework, starting with the earliest of the samplers, which date from the seventeenth century.

The samplers were worked on linen, although in the eighteenth century, Dutch schoolgirls frequently used cotton as a foundation fabric, a practice unheard of in the rest of Europe where the fabric was still a luxury. The embroidery threads were silk, linen, or wool, and by the nineteenth century, cotton thread had also become a choice. The samplers were made in a variety of shapes, from squares to horizontal or vertical rectangles, with a tendency in the eighteenth century for girls in larger cities such as Amsterdam or Middelburg to choose the square. Sometimes the edges were elaborately finished with hem stitching and needlemade picot edging.

Regional characteristics developed in Dutch samplers that make it possible to attribute many of them to a city or specific region of the country. Friesland is responsible for one of the more distinct bodies of work, partly because of its alphabet, which is unmistakable with its blocklike letters ornamented with curlicues, and partly because of such characteristic motifs as tightly worked bands of geometric patterns (figure 4).

Frequently a Dutch sampler includes a coat of arms or another traditional symbol of the city in which it was worked: paired rabbits indicate the city of Amsterdam; a single rabbit, that of Middelburg. Sometimes buildings can be identified: Lange Jan, a yellow brick tower in Middelburg, was embroidered on a 1764 sampler in the Cooper-Hewitt collection.

Dutch samplers rarely include religious texts or maxims, although occasionally a personal note is added such as that on a Frisian sampler in the Cooper-Hewitt collection that records the names of two men who built a mill in the embroiderer's town in 1721.

More than the needlework of any of the other European countries, Dutch needlework reveals the nation's political history. Centuries of struggling against larger and more powerful states can be seen in political images such as "The Lion Holding the Sword and Arrows" and "The Maid of The Netherlands in a Dutch Garden," both symbols of freedom.

The eighteenth-century "Dutch rococo samplers" form another group of distinctive needlework (figure 5). The samplers were decorated with flowers and hearts executed in rococo stitch, a stitch that was tightly massed to decorate such diverse accessories of the period as shoes and psalters.

In the nineteenth century, uniquely Dutch motifs gave way to romantic motifs such as the pastoral landscapes and floral bouquets that were popular throughout Europe.

The embroiderer's name or her initials, the monograms of family members and instructors, and the date are usually included on Dutch samplers. In the nineteenth century, the age of the embroiderer was sometimes added, too.

## Germany

A considerable number of German samplers have survived, the earliest of which date from the first half of the seventeenth century.

Until the nineteenth century, when cotton became widely available, linen was always used for the foundation of German samplers and silk for embroidery thread. In shape, northern German samplers were usually square, while from the seventeenth century on, those from southern Germany were vertical rectangles. In both regions, the practice pieces were almost always hemmed in a tidy manner.

Samplers made in northern Germany are much closer in appearance to the samplers of Scandinavia and The Netherlands than to those of southern Germany. Those made in the Vierlande, a region in the north, on the Elbe River, are sombre pieces embroidered in black with circular motifs. The Cooper-Hewitt collection contains a sampler from northern Germany on which the young embroiderer has carefully stitched a Hebrew alphabet and the Old Testament scene of Cain slaying Abel (figure 6). In the Roman Catholic south, a large crucifixion scene often dominates the center of a long vertical sampler, with bands of pattern beneath and/or above the symbol. Occasionally one finds southern German samplers with motifs from the Old Testament. Adam and Eve, when they appear, are plump and jolly (figure 7). The samplers of Central Europe had taken on a characteristic look as early as the seventeenth century, due to a preference for floral motifs worked in cross stitch (figure 8).

Texts were unusual on German samplers until the nineteenth century, when a few sentimental inscriptions and fragments of verse began to appear. Religious maxims are sometimes found on the long, narrow samplers from southern Germany. Most German samplers are dated and monogrammed.

## Scandinavia

Scandinavian samplers are generally more sedate and restrained than those from the Continent or Great Britain. The variety of stitches on the sampler is reduced, and indeed, the sampler itself is slightly smaller in size, suggesting that the young girl who stitched the sampler already had been imbued with a sense of thrift and economy.

Wool was regularly used in Scandinavian samplers, both for foundation fabric and embroidery thread. The white deflected element sampler was an exception; in this type, white embroidery thread was used to deflect the warps and wefts of a piece of woven white linen or cotton from their horizontal and vertical alignment in order to create an openwork effect.

Many of the motifs found on Scandinavian samplers also appear on samplers from northern Germany and The Netherlands, although their arrangement is different. One image of uniquely Scandinavian appeal is the Biblical story of the woman of Samaria at the well with Christ.

The date and a number of personal monograms are usually present on Scandinavian samplers, but the embroiderer's full name is not given.

6. Northern or central Germany, 1796  
Silk on plain-weave cotton  
Stitches: cross, satin, eyelet, double running  
Dimensions: 13¾ x 14 inches  
Bequest of Gertude M. Oppenheimer  
1981-28-190







7. Southern Germany, 1747

Silk on plain-weave linen

Stitches: two-sided cross, half cross, satin

Dimensions: 21¼ x 13¼ inches

Bequest of Mrs. Henry E. Coe  
1941-69-247

8. Bohemia (Czechoslovakia), 1683

Embroiderer: M.M.T.

Silk and pearl on plain-weave linen

Stitches: two-sided cross

Dimensions: 13½ x 11½ inches

Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer  
1981-28-184









9. France, 1832  
 Embroiderer: V.P.Q.  
 Silk on plain-weave linen  
 Stitches: cross, satin, back  
 Dimensions: 9¼ x 10½ inches  
 Bequest of Mrs. Henry E. Coe  
 1941-69-66

## Italy

Samplers were stitched in Italy from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, but eighteenth-century samplers are rare.

Seventeenth-century Italian samplers were worked on large squares of linen as well as on long, narrow rectangles. Silk or linen threads were used to embroider patterns around all four edges of the sampler, with no attempt to present a "picture." The bands of pattern on these samplers are generally composed of a variety of motifs, each repeated only once or twice.

Nineteenth-century Italian samplers are the most prevalent. In shape, they are usually horizontal rectangles with cut, unhemmed edges. Embroidery was done in silk, linen, or cotton thread. While alphabets are commonly present on these samplers, verses and maxims are not. The alphabet is always introduced by a cross, the traditional way of starting the alphabet in Roman Catholic countries. Usually a number of religious and domestic motifs, including animals and people, are depicted within a variety of floral borders. Often a chinoiserie design is included, and frequently several different border patterns are used on the same sampler.

The cross stitch on an Italian sampler was always worked with two separate journeys of the needle and thread across the cloth, each journey making a half cross stitch. This creates a row of double parallel lines along the back of the foundation, which can be used for identification.

Italian girls often signed and dated their samplers.

## France

The relatively small number of French samplers in existence suggests that fewer samplers were made in France than in other European countries, although it is difficult to assess to what extent the scarcity of examples is due to the apparent lack of interest that the French have shown for studying or preserving this part of their heritage.

Linen was used as the foundation fabric for eighteenth-century French samplers, with silk for embroidery thread. In the nineteenth century, cotton was often preferred. Sizes and shapes of French samplers vary, and the edges were sometimes finished and sometimes not.

Designs on French samplers are similar to those on Belgian, English, and Italian samplers, and therefore cannot be used as a method of determining the country of origin. Nor is the presence of a French text reason alone to ascribe a work to France, since schoolgirls in England and the United States were sometimes assigned French texts for their samplers (see figure 18).

One possible way of authenticating a French sampler is through the identification of stitch techniques. In all of the nineteenth-century French samplers in the Cooper-Hewitt collection, cross stitch is the predominant stitch (figure 9), and it is made in a peculiarly French way, with one passage of the needle and thread across the cloth, in a looping backward movement.

Another distinguishing factor is that a French girl usually included her age on her sampler, along with her name and the date.

## Spain

Spanish samplers were not regularly dated until the nineteenth century, and consequently it has been difficult to determine a chronology for the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century examples that exist.

Spanish samplers are almost always filled with geometric bands of pattern arranged in one of three ways: a receding square on a sampler approximately two feet square (figure 10); vertical columns positioned on a larger vertical rectangle; or a long, horizontal rectangle, smaller in size than the other two. On this last, the embroidery consists almost entirely of running stitch. Each of the three types has its distinctive coloring. The receding square arrangement is colored with bright pastels and is worked in silk threads; the vertical column is worked in shades of natural and blue, using linen and wool; and the horizontal rectangle is stitched with brightly colored wool, linen, or cotton.

The name of the embroiderer, the name of the teacher, and the date are often included on the square samplers. The Cooper-Hewitt collection has two samplers of almost identical design, one made in 1820, the other, in 1826, which read in translation, "I made this in the house of my teacher, Maria Collier." The other types of samplers have neither text nor alphabets.

## Mexico

Mexican samplers are filled with vitality, exuberance and bright color (figure 11), and the needlework is often of very high quality. During the period that Mexico was a colony of Spain, from 1519 until 1821, education was controlled almost exclusively by the Church. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a number of European religious orders sent nuns to Mexico who taught needlework in convent schools. Consequently many of the individual motifs on Mexican samplers are European, although there are a great number of uniquely Mexican touches. In some cases a particular style can be associated with a specific school. The Cooper-Hewitt collection has two similar samplers made by different students at the Academy at Puebla in 1852 (figure 12) and 1853.

A list of uniquely Mexican sampler types and characteristics would include white samplers, samplers of withdrawn element work, samplers worked with glass beads, and those with elaborate needlemade edges.

Sometimes Mexican motifs are incorporated with European motifs. A motto frequently embroidered on Mexican samplers was "Ni me doy ni me presto, solo di me dueña soy." ("I do not lend or give myself, I keep myself only for my master.") "My master" refers not to a man but to the Church.

A uniquely Mexican embroidery technique is the "Aztec stitch." To work it, warp and weft threads of the foundation fabric are withdrawn from the cloth at spaced intervals, leaving a regular grid of foundation fabric squares. Embroidery stitches are worked diagonally across the squares, each stitch wrapping once or twice around remaining groups of elements before returning and wrapping in the opposite direction.

10. Spain, 1802

Silk on plain-weave cotton

Stitches: satin, cross, running, back, four-sided, chain, eyelet

Dimensions: 27¼ x 26½ inches

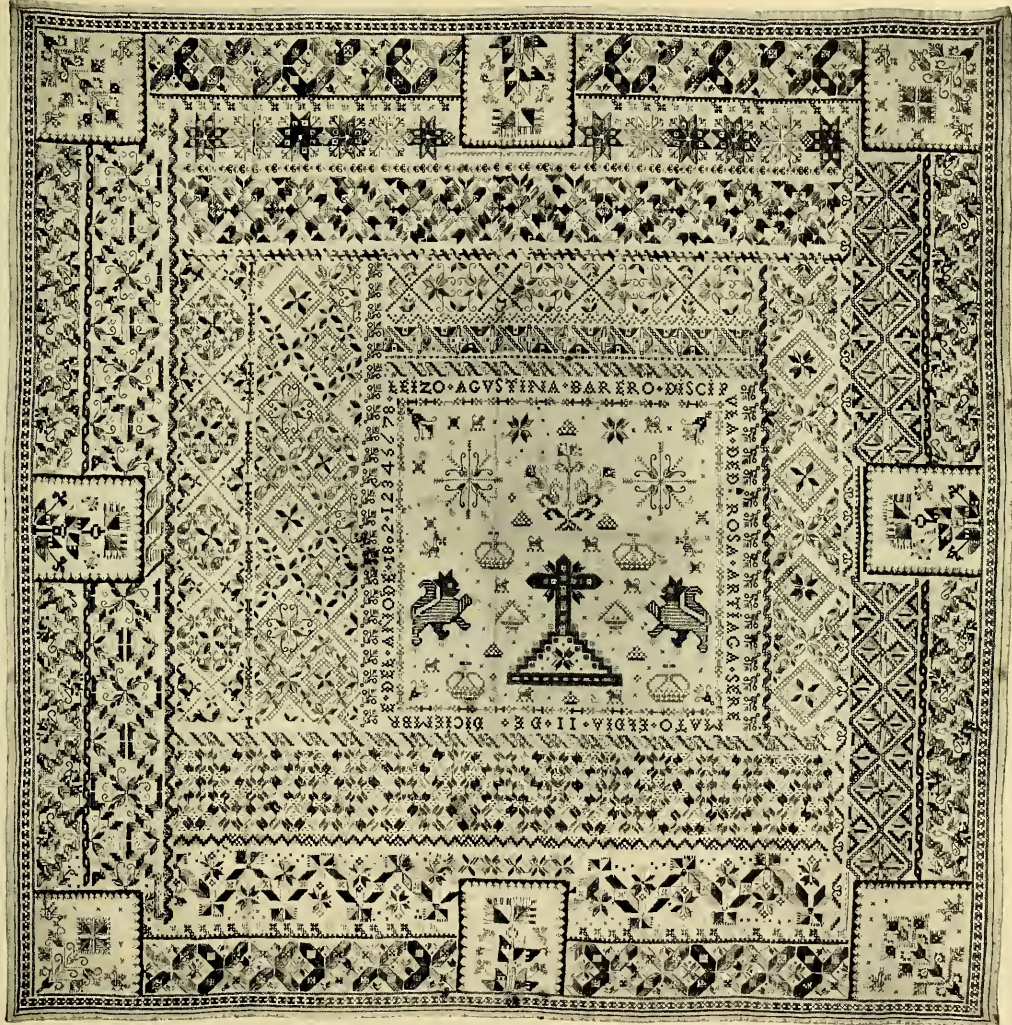
Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer  
1981-28-421

Text:

*Leizo Agustina Barero discipula ded. Rosa Artiaga  
Seremato el día ii de diciembre del año de 1802*

(Made by Agustina Barero, student of Rosa  
Artiaga Seremato, December 11, 1802)





LEIZO AGUSTINA BARERO DISCIP

1821-12-34-7

1821-12-34-7

1821-12-34-7

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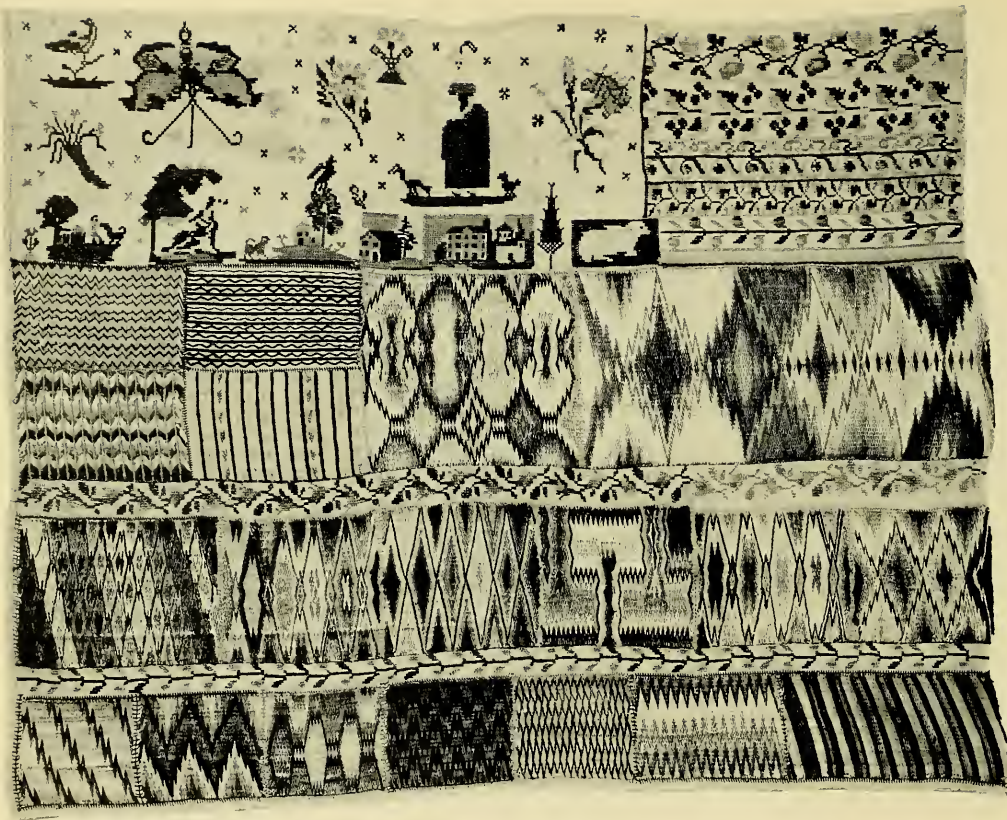
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11. Mexico, early 19th century  
 Silk on plain-weave cotton  
 Stitches: long-armed cross, whipped  
 running, satin, roumanian, fern  
 Dimensions: 14¾ x 18¾ inches  
 Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer  
 1981-28-341





12. Puebla, Mexico, 1852  
 Embroiderer: Refugio Gavino, student in  
 the Puebla Academy  
 Silk on plain-weave cotton  
 Stitches: satin, stem, knot  
 Dimensions: 17½ x 28¾ inches  
 Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer  
 1981-28-395

**Text:**

*Lo hizo Refugio Gavino en la enseñanza de la  
 Academia de Puebla en el mes de Agosto del año  
 de 1852.*

(Made by Refugio Gavino under the  
 instruction of the Puebla Academy in the  
 month of August, 1852.)



## Great Britain

Samplers from England and other parts of the United Kingdom offer a rich variety of styles and stitches—a diversity that may reflect Britain's well-established ties with other European countries.

Several styles of samplers were being made in England in the seventeenth century, including the isolated motif type (figure 13) and the various band-type samplers (see frontispiece).

Most seventeenth-century British samplers were long, narrow rectangles. The foundation fabric was prepared by cutting an eight- to ten-inch length of linen fabric from a two- to three-foot-wide selvage width of linen. The long, cut edges were hemmed and the embroidery was worked across the shorter dimension. Bands of openwork, raised work, and solid embroidery were usually combined on these samplers. Often bands of colored silks were worked in intricate patterns and stitches. Sometimes the entire piece was in white. Later, still, in the seventeenth century, whitework bands were combined with bands of colored embroidery, alphabet and texts. Two or three letter *A*'s started the alphabet, followed by one version of each of the other letters.

A number of new styles developed in Great Britain in the eighteenth century, including the most familiar sampler format, a combination of a picture, a verse, and a repetition of alphabets.

Some British samplers can be associated with specific schools. The Museum has two samplers signed Ackworth School. Ackworth was a Quaker school in Yorkshire, England, that became a model for some of the Quaker schools in the United States. One of the pieces is a simple darning sampler, which would have had practical application, since the female students at Ackworth were expected to make and mend their own clothes, along with all of the linen for the school and the boys' underclothing. The other Ackworth sampler is a closely filled arrangement of circular motifs and numbers.

Scottish samplers derive from English work, while having definite characteristics of their own. Often a large house dominates the center of the sampler (figure 14). One house, with a peaked gable, four columns at the front, and a garden enclosed by a picket fence, appears on several different Scottish samplers, with variations in the windows, the mortaring, and the roof tiles.

In the samplers of the British Isles, the embroiderer included her name and the date, although she generally omitted her age.

While sampler-making traditions came to America with the first European settlers, samplers from the seventeenth century are extremely rare. The earliest American samplers in the Cooper-Hewitt collection were made in Boston in 1729 and 1734 (see figure 1). The collection contains other samplers made in Massachusetts and Rhode Island before the Revolutionary

## United States

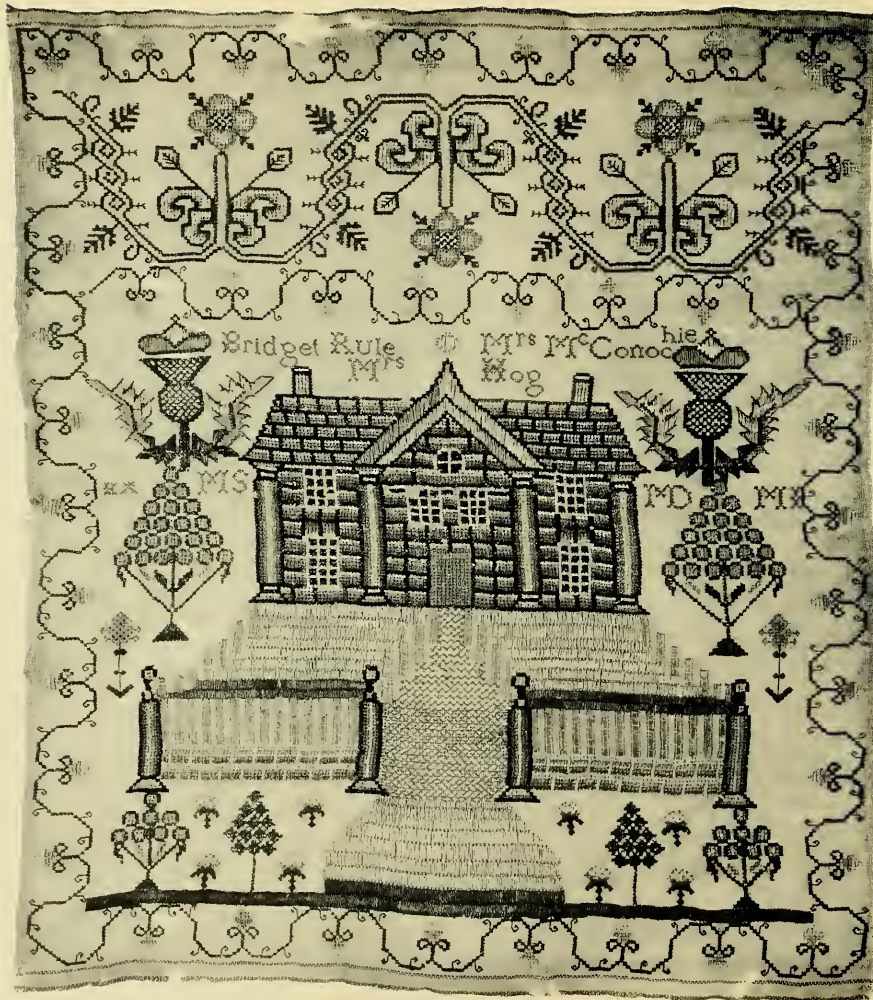
13. England, mid-17th century  
Silk and metal-wrapped silk on plain-weave  
linen  
Stitches using silk: tent, half cross, chain,  
running  
Stitches using metal-wrapped silk: back,  
crossed chain, plaited braid, chain, ladder,  
wrapping, looping, interlaced looping  
Dimensions: 21 x 14 inches  
Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer  
1981-28-38

#### Following pages

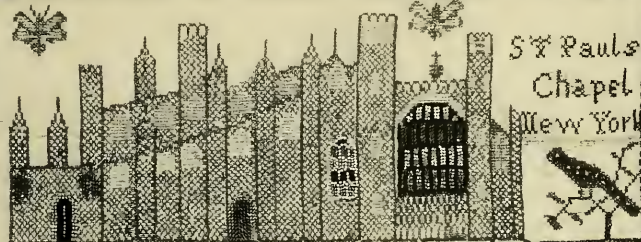
14. Scotland, probably Edinburgh, late 18th  
or early 19th century  
Embroiderer: Bridget Rule  
Silk on plain-weave wool  
Stitches: cross, satin, back, rococo (queen),  
double running  
Dimensions: 12¼ x 11¼ inches  
Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer  
1981-28-85  
The names of the schoolmistresses, Mrs.  
McConochie and Mrs. Hog, have been  
embroidered on the sampler. The initials  
are probably those of schoolmates.

15. Southern New Jersey, 1838  
Embroiderer: Elizabeth Scull, age 8  
Silk and beads on plain-weave wool  
Stitches: cross, saun, stem, chain, buttonhole,  
feather  
Dimensions: 16½ by 13 inches  
Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer  
1981-28-108  
Elizabeth Scull was the daughter of Lydia and  
John Scull of Egg Harbor, New Jersey.









Jesus permit thy gracious name to stand  
As the first effort of an infants hand  
And while her fingers o'er the canvass move  
Engage her tender heart to seek thy love  
With thy dear children may she have a part  
And write thy Name thy self upon her heart

Elizabeth Scull  
Aged 8 Years  
December 9 1838

In Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free He came to let the oppressed  
go free and to break every yoke All who fear God and work righteousness  
of whatever name shall be called by the name of him who first re-  
ward the Benefactors and forgive the enemies of Africa's children. Many  
daughters have done valour but may yet remember by our regular obla-  
tions excel them all.

Blest be the grace which moved the feeling heart  
To plead the cause of man and break his chains  
Blest be the men who taught the heathen art  
To banish flav'ring bonds from Freedom's plains  
Let Africa's daughters feel the grateful ties  
Which bind them to reward their Patrons care  
By striving to obtain the noble prize  
Of praise on earth and heav'n's bright crown to wear.

New York African Free School April<sup>th</sup> 1803.

MARY EMISTON

16. Made at the New York African Free  
School, New York, April 1803  
Embroiderer: Mary Emiston  
Silk on plain-weave linen  
Stitches: cross  
Dimensions: 11 x 16 1/4 inches  
Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer  
1981-28-77

The African Free School, founded in 1787  
by the New York Manumission Society, was  
a coeducational school that taught practical  
skills.



War, in the 1750s, '60s, and '70s. Many of these pre-Revolutionary samplers include both the date the sampler was made and the embroiderer's birthdate, information that is of great help in determining where the girl lived. Without such specific information, genealogical research is difficult; towns were frequently settled by related families, and often two or three people in a township had the same name.

As might be expected American samplers reflect patterns of immigration. Samplers made in Massachusetts, which was settled largely by the British, use English motifs. In certain cases it is difficult to distinguish a Massachusetts sampler from an English sampler. Samplers made in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, which was settled largely by emigrants from Germany, display many of the same motifs found on German samplers. The exceptions are samplers made in schools along the Susquehanna River. The blocked format of these is similar to that found in some English samplers and can perhaps be attributed to the British names of some of the teachers: Mrs. Leah Mequier's (McQuire) and Mrs. Buchanan's names appear on two Cooper-Hewitt samplers.

Many of the larger schools had their students produce samplers that are distinctive enough to be associated with that school. All the students produced essentially the same sampler, varying the verse or the placement of details. When one is familiar with the styles of the various schools, it is possible to make correct attributions. Only rarely was the name of the school stitched on the sampler (figure 16).

American contributions to sampler making include the family record sampler and samplers with black backgrounds (figure 17). In the Middle Atlantic states the backgrounds were closely worked with black cross stitch, while in Bristol, Rhode Island, long and floating black stitches were used.

Beginning in the 1820s and '30s, larger samplers, of approximately two by two and one-half feet, were preferred, and they were worked with larger and fewer kinds of stitches.

Samplers continued to be made by American schoolgirls at the beginning of the twentieth century, but after World War I, they were stitched primarily by adult women who regarded the craft as a nostalgic and sentimental one.

In addition to samplers from all of the countries of Great Britain, Europe, and North and South America, samplers from the Far East, China, and Sri Lanka are occasionally found in needlework collections. These pieces were usually commercial endeavors, however, prepared for a Western market. It is the embroidered samplers of the West, made for prosaic reasons, yet imbued with the individuality of their makers and the stamp of their time, that have gained in appeal as the years have passed.

*Gillian Mass*

#### **Following pages**

17. Probably New York or Connecticut, about 1800

Embroiderer: Lucy Lathrop

Silk on plain-weave linen

Stitches: cross, long-armed cross, tent, stem, rococo (queen), satin, eyelet, chain

Dimensions: 14 x 12¾ inches

Bequest of Marian Hague

1971-50-158

18. Baltimore, Maryland, June 1823

Embroiderer: Louisa Nenninger, age 8

Silk on plain-weave linen

Stitches: cross

Dimensions: 17¾ x 17¼ inches

Bequest of Gertrude M. Oppenheimer

1981-28-78

Text:

*Louis Seize connoit les pertes qu'on déplore*  
(Louis XVI knew deplorable losses)

*Déjà de nos beaux jours on voit briller aurore*  
(We already see the dawn of our beautiful days)

Louisa Nenninger, daughter of Louisa (Kohlstadt) and John Nenninger, was born in 1815. Louisa married Richard Connelly in December 1841.







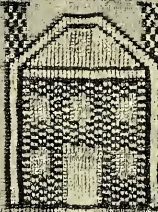
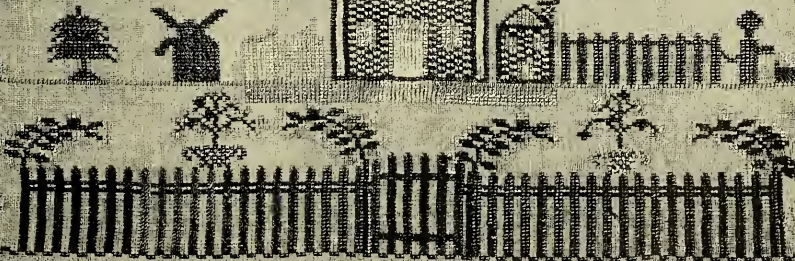
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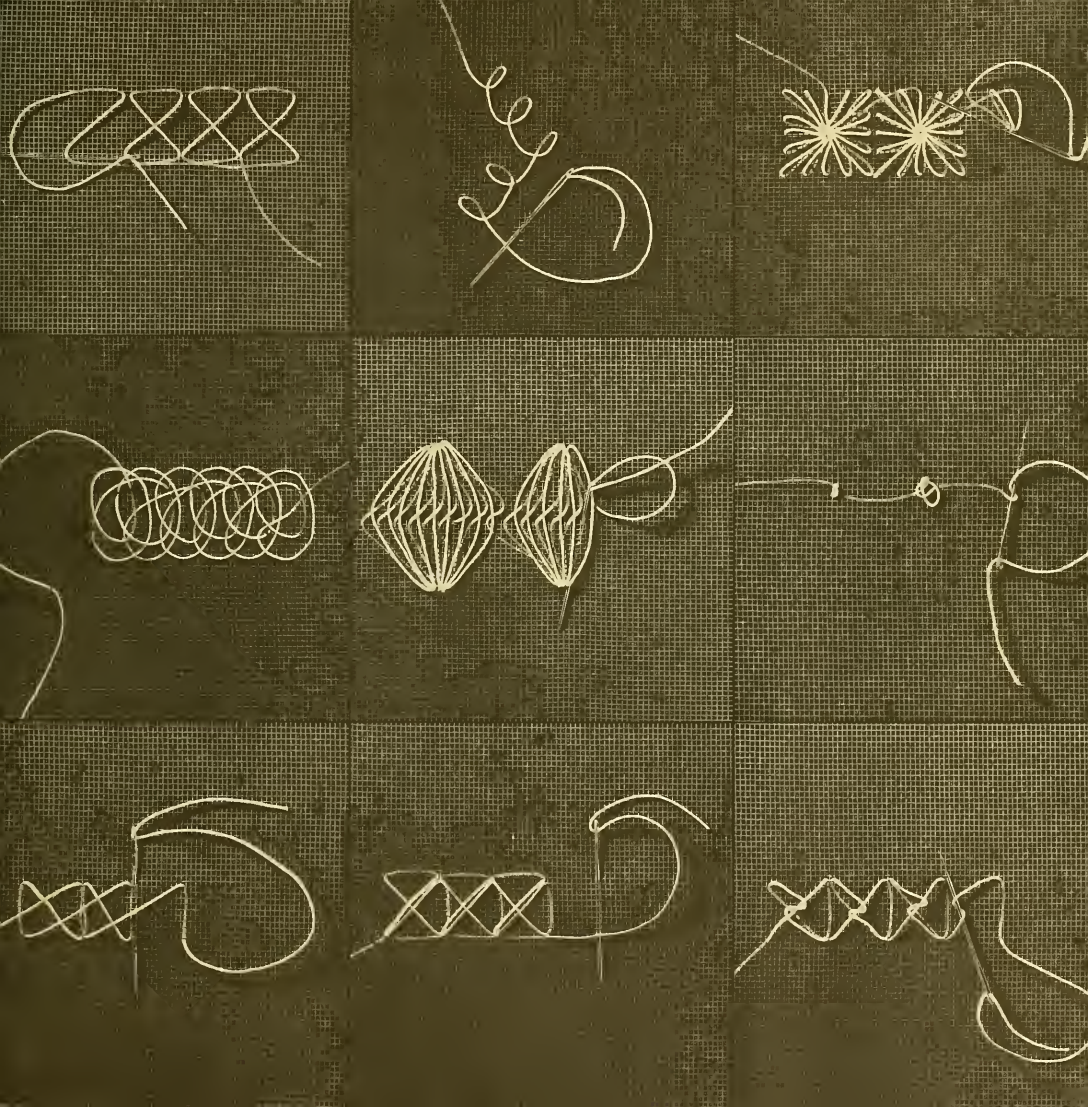
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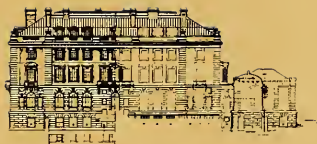
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